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Erastus Milo Cravath



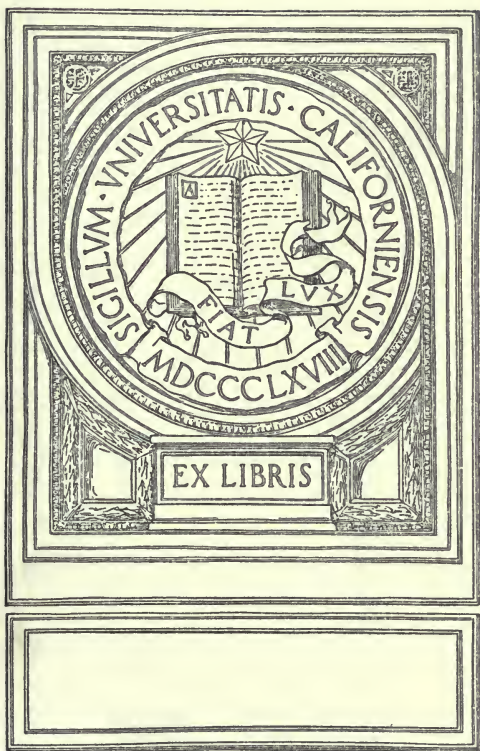
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The following addresses are printed in memory of President Cravath for the benefit of the friends who could not be present at the funeral services held in the Fisk Memorial Chapel at Nashville. It was at Nashville that Chaplain Cravath was mustered out of the Union service at the close of the war, and there he began in the same year the great work to which he consecrated his life. It was, therefore, peculiarly fitting that, in compliance with his often expressed wish, Dr. Cravath was buried among his comrades who had given up their lives to emancipate the race to the uplifting of which he gave a lifetime of devotion. The story of a noble life and a great victory was never more beautifully told than by that scene in the beautiful National Cemetery at Nashville when, at

sun down, comrades of the Union army, side by side with veterans of the Confederate army, followed by a multitude freed from bondage, lovingly carried their friend to his last resting-place within gun shot of the hills where, thirty-six years before, the contending armies had camped.





Address of Dr. A. J. Beard.



THE separation of the soul from the body, which we call death, is in itself unspeakably sad. There is seldom in earthly life any event more sad.

If we look out upon life, spread before us as a great picture, the study of it, in composition and coloring, shows the shadows laid on in deep lines. There are the checks of Providence, the shocks of calamity, and mysteries of trouble. We see life breaking off into precipices and hopelessly lost in deserts. We see ideals never fulfilled, and promises collapsing before they reach fulfilment. We see human ambition mocked, the largeness of human desires here in contempt, the pride of life, the pomp of power forever fading in a dissolving view. Youth in life's green spring, man in the full strength of years, the sweet babe and

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grayhaired age, together departing in sudden and awful silence, and long troops of most precious affections expiring, until at last, above all the gladness and pleasures of life, the picture appears as one great burial-place with a ceaseless procession passing on in the solemn march of death, while the atmosphere grows dark with farewells to the dying and mournings for the dead. It is a picture of incompleteness, of broken plans, of work unfinished, until one is well-nigh ready to exclaim, in the wail of the dejected man uttered nearly three thousand years ago, "Therefore I came to hate life; the work of it is grievous to me, for one generation passeth away and another cometh; and man cometh with vanity and departeth in darkness."

Thus death casts its shadow constantly on the vision of life. The prostrate form, whose voice was sweet to those to whom it spoke, speaks no more. The dear face which held all the tender love that life had to give responds no more. The language of scope and delicacy which uttered the strong thoughts and pleasant fancies of the soul is hushed. The flashing eye is dim. The hand no more gives its grasp. Therefore I say that the separation of the soul from the body is in itself inexpressibly sad—the more sad that there is no escape from it.

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It was Victor Hugo, the great poet of France, who said, "We are all condemned to death, but with an indefinite reprieve." In saying this there is no denial that the picture of life has in it light and joy and gracious meanings. There are the anticipations of youth, the work and development of maturer years, the satisfactions of study, of growth, and the delights as well as the pains of thought. There are the inheritances of overcoming. There are precious affections and friendships, and the memories of them.

Nevertheless, if this were all of life, and the creation of the earth and its people were in question, had I a voice in it, I would say, "No, do not make a world where the law of struggle is the law of life,— a world for the vast majorities, in all ages and in all lands, in the glooms of darkness,— a world of incompleteness everywhere,— a world of toil, where most people are glad if they can eat when they are hungry, drink when they are thirsty, and sleep when they are tired,— a world hurrying to the insatiable and ever ready grave." Grant all the satisfactions of intellect and of taste, the thoughts and fancies of the brain, and all the glory which in the seasons the world puts on, and if this were all of life, I would say, "No, do not create it," and so would God.

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You remember that when the Lord of Life came to face the termination of His earthly existence, how pained His disciples were. They could not be satisfied. This sudden sundering of their hopes, and the knowledge that they should look into that beloved face no more, filled their hearts with sorrow. Their Master's reply was, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me." He was saying, "This world is but one room in the Father's house. Life is not short; it is time that is short. Life does not terminate here, life goes on."

Let Him who said, "I am the light of the world," put His light upon the picture of life, and there is a new aspect to what we see. It transfigures it now. The face which has been claimed by death brightens with glory. The shadows lose their darkness. We see now what before was invisible. We also see that that which we called incompleteness was our dimness of vision. In this strong light earth is not a place of burial. It is everywhere life—and life more abundant, springing up out of death. That which we call death is but a point in the life of advancing being, a door through which we pass onward, a moving forward. When the mortal frame can no longer serve the high interests of the soul, the death-

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less spirit seeks more perfect relations and the life still goes on. What we call dissolution is a step into a larger development of life. Even Nature is trying to show us this all the time. In the freshness of every spring, in the glory of every summer, and in the fruitage of every autumn, Nature is taking up the parable of life and saying that in her vast economy nothing ceases to be. Everything changes. Nothing is extinct. Thus the explanations of life come in death. The mystery of the present is solved in the answer of the future.

So, then, the real answer to life is death, namely, "When this corruption puts on incorruption, and this mortality puts on immortality, then death is swallowed up in life," and we live on forever. The dying explains the living. It says, "The glory of the terrestrial is one, the glory of the celestial is another."

As I look down now upon the form through which we knew him whom we loved and delighted to honor, I seem to hear the prayer of Christ for his larger life: "Lord, I will that those whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Do you think that he would care for a score more of earthly years, now that he in the University of God is getting his light upon the fullness of life, by the side of which his best

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knowledge here was but the knowledge of a child? The problems which interested him here will now be solved, and the glory of his present life may not be compared with anything of the past.

As earthly lives go, Dr. Cravath has lived a great life. By all the standards of our present existence, it was a great life. He began in a happy environment, a farmer's boy in a beautiful section of our country, where life was earnest and where schools were good. He became a student at a college where life again was earnest — a college of Christian ideals and of large sincerity, where God was recognized as the Father of all men, and where God's fatherhood meant man's brotherhood. Here this young student came through the college and the theological seminary out into life, with a faith that life is not a mistake, but is the product of God's love.

First he was a pastor, then a chaplain in the Union army until he was mustered out of the service here in Nashville in June, 1865. Almost immediately appointed by the American Missionary Association, no one was more responsible than he for the beginnings of Fisk University. It was Dr. Cravath who suggested its name. It took faith in that day to call those barracks just deserted by soldiers —

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mere wooden shells of houses — a university, but he had the faith.

The founding of this institution marked a new era in the educational world for a new people. It was no mistake. As field secretary, Dr. Cravath served the American Missionary Association ten years, and in 1875 became the first and only president of Fisk University. Thus Dr. Cravath has given his life to this work for thirty-five years. He has been president of Fisk for a quarter of a century. It has been a great life — a great life.

A quarter of a century of it has seen this institution grow from a rude primary school to its present proportions. Everywhere it bears Dr. Cravath's stamp. It is largely his monument. To manage, govern, and direct an institution of this kind requires an exceptional man. He must have many gifts; he must comprehend its necessities not only, but also its possibilities. He must have initiative and the power of incentive. He must have sympathy with young people, and humor for the sake of sympathy. He must be open to improvements, yet guard against the demoralization of restless experiments. He must not only command the respect and confidence of the students and the constituency, but by his fairness, friendliness, and power of personal

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kindliness he must secure their cordial coöperation. He must be able to live optimistically and to put up with much faultfinding and misrepresentation, knowing how to take criticism (often unjust) patiently from those who are narrow, opinionated, and querulous. He must be able to receive pain as if it did not hurt him, and must be courageous enough to be true to his recommendations as to teachers and professors, even when it may give them pain. With positive convictions, strong sense, good judgment, there must be tact and forbearance to overcome the opposition of those who do not accept his judgment. With all this, he must be a man of affairs, with business qualities in touch with human nature about him. Then he must crown these qualities with mental alertness, intellectual power, and Christian devotion.

I need not say that Dr. Cravath met these requisitions and others to a very marked degree. His records in the annals of the great society in which he was so influential a factor will be handed down and cherished as one of great strength, of large vision, of prophetic purpose, and of unshrinking fidelity. Equally removed from indecision and from rashness, he tenaciously held to his convictions and to his will. While he did not shrink from being

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identified with an unpopular cause, he never lost his charity for those who did not see with his light, nor his regard for those who differed from him. So he lived a faithful life—"faithful unto death." In its fidelity, in its influence upon thousands of students who have gone out from his supervision with a fixed purpose to be good and true, in its spiritual power, in its intention, and in its achievement, it was a great life. It will hereafter be a greater life.

Our friend lives with the power of an endless life. His work will endure. Doubtless he will know how it goes on.

This university loses. His friends and co-workers who honored him are losers. The people to whom he gave himself and who need such men are losers. Of the loss to those who sit in the innermost circles of this great grief and sorrow none may speak. We sorrow together while we a little longer stay and wait.





Address of Dr. J. C. Merrill.

IT very rarely falls to the lot of any young man to be able to announce at the beginning of his career the programme of his life; but thirty-six years ago there stood a young man before a throng ten times as large as this. They had been called together by men interested in them, desiring their elevation,—statesmen, soldiers, educators. They had been summoned as they came by regimental bands stationed here at Nashville, and as they stood before Chaplain Cravath, he then and there announced that a school was planned for their benefit, which should give to them the same opportunities that had been afforded their white brethren of the North and South. To the fulfilment of the promise, to the completing of the prophecy there uttered Dr. Cravath

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gave his entire career, and to-day we stand in the presence of his work.

This beautiful campus, these majestic buildings, are the monuments, physically speaking, of our dear brother who has thus completed his career. But they are only the physical tokens of the glorious outcome of his great life. All over the Southland to-day—in humble homes, to be sure, but in homes that owe well-nigh everything to this University—there live true-hearted men and women who are rearing their little children, and in the neighborhoods in which they dwell are a constant influence for good, because of this man's life. Compared with this outcome of Chaplain Cravath's prophecy and promise, this institution which we see here is as nothing.

What gained this marvelous success which we to-day can only begin to comprehend? It was the magnificent equipment which God gave him at the outset. Born to be a statesman, he has attained more than a statesman's success. It was impossible for him to see things in a small way, after a petty fashion. He could see things in the large, as a statesman must always see things,—in the large. He could use men for lofty purposes, as a statesman will always use men,—for a lofty purpose. And because he was born a states-

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man, and had the qualifications which would have enabled him, had he gone into politics, to have risen to the very front rank, he has lived this glorious life of which we tell here to-day.

He was also a general. He knew how to lead men; he was always at the front; never asked those who coöperated with him to go where he would not dare to go; he was ready to endure self-denial; he understood those who followed him, and he led them to victory.

More than all, President Cravath was a Christian man. There is nothing so magnificent under heaven as a true Christian man: more lofty than the statesman, who can only rule the affairs of a nation for a day; more superb than a general, who can only lead armies for present victories. A Christian man has within him an endless life, and we rejoice in the thought, as we stand before the bier of the man whom we loved with all our hearts, that he had the Christian manhood which has given him the power to do the work which is not finished, and can be finished only as it is followed out in the lines which he has laid down as a statesman, in the lines which he has laid down as a general, in a campaign which he projected as a man of such proportions as to be able to command the following of other

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men in doing a work which is to last through all the centuries.

We say good-by for a moment to our good friend, and only a few years hence we are going to stand beside him and talk over the work that he here did; and as we recall the fact that he on one night lay in his soldier's tent beneath the stars on this very campus, before he was mustered out of the service, we can well believe that he saw in his dreams that night a ladder more lofty than the ladder of Jacob — a ladder that reached unto heaven, and not only one which he could ascend, but up which he could lead a race that he loved, a race for which he lived, a race for which he gave his life.





Address of Dr. James J. Uance.



TAKE my stand this afternoon inside the circle of grief of Fisk University and its friends, and am grateful for the privilege which permits me to pay my tribute of loving respect to the memory of President Cravath.

Some of you knew him more intimately than did I, and yet I knew him and admired him for what he was and for what he did. Perhaps better than I knew him, did I know his work; and, after all, it is a man's work that tells the story of a man's life. It is not so much what a man's views are, for honest men may differ in their views. Sometimes we have a silly way of estimating manhood by its views; we have a way of saying that a man who holds to our views is a very good man, and the man who differs from our views is a very bad man. But the divine standard is not to estimate a

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man by his views. "By their fruits you shall know them." The great question which God asks is of a man's life work. It is the life work that reflects the man.

It is by his life work that President Cravath vindicates his claim to our love and respect, and to the love and respect of the white race and the black race in the years that fall behind, and in the years that are to come.

His work was vast in its sweep and great in its achievements. How vast his work was in its sweep only the coming years will tell, for he has been working at the foundation; and however conspicuous his work, still, compared with its results in the future, I believe we shall come to see that he was working largely down out of sight. When the superstructure which shall rise on the foundation which he has raised appears, we shall then see how vast was the scope of the work which he has done.

It was a work also great in its achievements. It was great because of the difficulties he had to overcome. How great those difficulties were none know so well as we who dwell here. His work was made more difficult, sometimes, by stupid blunderers in one section, and by blunderers of prejudice in another. Great difficulties had to be overcome before the institution could begin to breathe its life. They

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were met courageously and mastered manfully. His work was great because of the self-sacrifice it involved; and how great was that self-sacrifice we who dwell here best know. To do this work it was necessary for a man to make himself of no reputation. Dr. Cravath caught the spirit of Christ, and became a minister.

It was a work great in its character. The most difficult task in behalf of the colored race is that which President Cravath took up into his heart. More difficult, I think, than the task of emancipation has been the task of education. By as much as Moses' task in the wilderness was more difficult than his task in Egypt, by so much has the task of Dr. Cravath and the men who are allied with him in similar work been more difficult than that of the men who struck the fetters from the slave.

Perhaps his work was greatest because of the spirit which animated it and the beauty which rested upon it, and which appeared to those of us who stood by and watched him as he toiled.

I think the supreme triumph of his victory is that here, under all these difficult surroundings, he did a work which has alike commended itself to white man, black man, to Northman and to Southman. Fisk University has never

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been a menace to aught that was dear to the Southern heart,—indeed, it has been a blessed safeguard; and if the spirit which breathed in President Cravath, lived in his work, and is represented by you who constitute Fisk University, obtained throughout the South and North, there would be no race question.

Dr. Cravath moved among us, commanding the respect and confidence of all. We knew him for an honest, earnest, kindly Christian man; and because he did such a work as this among us, I say that he was a great man. But he was something more than great: he was good — a great, good man, and greatest in his goodness. He was a friend to thousands who needed a friend; he was a prophet in an hour of darkness, a patriot in a time of turmoil and confusion.

There is a verse in the Bible which says:

A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

I think President Cravath fulfilled that prophecy. He was just that — an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

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Among other stories told of Henry Drummond is this: A Scotchwoman's husband was dying, and at the twilight hour she came for Drummond to go to the sick man's room. She said to him: "My husband is deein', sir, and he can no see ye, and he can no speak to ye, but I wad like him to hae a breath o' ye aboot him afore he dees." This is a beautiful thing to say of any man. To be an angel's presence at the bedside of one whose spirit is about to make its departure is not to have lived in vain. That is the way you feel toward Dr. Cravath. His presence was an angel's presence to you, whose faces are suffused with tears to-day. His work was a blessed work, he was Christ's minister. The work is over so far as his personality is concerned; yet the work itself has just begun. The work will go on. God has called the toiler home, and when the message came it was just the voice of the vesper angels calling him out of the field of human toil to bid him take his rest. It was a sweet whisper of divine love saying, "Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus;" and he has gone to be forever with his Lord.

I need not bid you cherish his memory, for already you have caught it up in your hearts, and you will pronounce his name in benediction to the generations which shall come after.



Address of Rev. Charles W. Dunn.



AS one privileged for some years to be the pastor of President Cravath and his family, I should like to add a brief word of tribute.

A few years ago, in one of the devotional meetings that are held weekly in Fisk University, the plan of the meeting was to invite members of the congregation to name their favorite chapter in the Bible. After a number had risen and responded, going over several of those chapters that are familiar and sacred to every child of God, President Cravath rose and probably surprised many in the congregation by naming — perhaps he did not say it was absolutely the favorite among all, but one of his favorites at least — the first chapter of Genesis. It was an indication simply of the type of life in the man. It was an illustration of the fact, which we all observed as he lived

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before us and worked with us, that he found his richest life in fellowship with the great fundamentals, with the great verities that underlie all life.

President Cravath did not care much for the quibbles of theology, although he was one who understood theological thought. When he said that the first chapter of Genesis was one of his favorites, he was not speaking from the standpoint of the critic, although he kept up with the times and sympathized with the legitimate movements that led to better views of these subjects. He was speaking as one who saw what every spiritual Christian sees in that account, a revelation of the living God, whose wisdom, love, and power account for all things. He was thinking of "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Just the thought of an infinite, personal Creator back of all things visible and invisible — that was a joy and an inspiration in his life. That was enough to furnish the motive for a steadfast, unwearying life of service. Here we find the explanation of his life — of his greatness, for it was greatness that he had. Here also we find the secret of the intensely practical character of his life. For the most practical force that can come into a man's life is the inspiration that he gets from fellowship with great things.

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Not only did President Cravath himself live in the fellowship of the great facts and ideas of the universe, thus enriching and expanding his personal life, but he believed in the power of these things as forces to accomplish what the world needs to have done. He knew how, also, effectively to wield these forces. We classify ministers according to the lines of work in which they seem to excel. Possibly very few of those who lived under President Cravath's ministry would think of calling him distinctively an evangelistic preacher. But some of the most powerful evangelistic sermons that have been heard in our midst have come from the lips of this man, as he held before his hearers in vivid light some of the eternal verities. There are lighter methods of preaching that stir the surface feelings and produce apparently greater effects. But they are not so effective to secure the real object of the gospel — the conforming of a soul to the image of the Son of God. As much as any man I ever knew, President Cravath seemed to feel the vanity of the former and the power of the latter conception of evangelistic preaching. He knew that if men could not be touched and moved to duty by the contemplation of the great facts and truths of God and men, of life and destiny, it were little use to try to move

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them in any other way. The lighter ways may scratch the surface, but they do not touch the roots of life. President Cravath believed in the reality of spiritual things and in the practical character of spiritual forces. He did not think that the wood which the carpenter handles is any more practical than the human soul, human life, human beings of any race or color; he did not think that the plan that the architect draws for a building is any more practical than the pattern that has been set before mankind in Jesus Christ; he did not think that the tools which the carpenter wields, the plane and saw and hammer, are any more practical for their purpose than are the word of God and truth and love and the Divine Spirit as forces to work upon human life in the process of building God's spiritual temple.

I have spoken of these characteristics of our beloved president because this is the sort of vision of him that has been coming to me ever since the telegraph brought the sorrowful message that he was no more to be among us in the walks of earthly life. But I speak of them for another reason. These great fundamentals in which he found his life are just the things that are most precious in the time of sorrow like this. I wonder if, after all, there

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is any finer passage for a funeral occasion, that could mean more, or come home with greater power, than "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." If it were necessary to offer comfort to these sorrowing ones to-day, I wonder if it could be found in any better way than in recalling the great unchangeable facts of the infinite God, with his infinite wisdom, love, and power. Sometimes we place the love of God in the foreground. We say, God is love. And so the Scriptures say. But somehow we take this for granted. We cannot think of a malevolent God. God is love; yes, God is love. And God is wisdom. How glad we are that God is wisdom when we sit where these that are now in sorrow are sitting! And are we not glad that God is power? Granted that His acts are prompted by love; granted that they are directed by unerring wisdom: is there power enough to hold the creatures of His love and wisdom in firm control? When a strong worker is taken away in the prime of his powers, leaving a vacancy that seems almost impossible to fill, is there any slip in the cogs of the divine machinery? Is it because there is no master hand to keep things as they ought to be? When that little babe is breaking its mother's heart as it lies there, with its sweet, pale face

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among the flowers, waiting to be laid in its little grave, is that because there is no power? Is it because the divine hand is impotent to preserve the life it has given? No; the comfort comes, the joy comes, because we remember that *God is wisdom, God is love, God is power.*

It is not always easy to realize this comfort. The world cannot always keep from asking, *Why?* as it groans under the weight of suffering. But I would call your attention to a saying of the Scriptures which has been so much with me in these days that have just passed since this sorrow came to us. God was speaking to the people of Israel, reminding them of their history. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." There is no expense that will be spared, no price too great to pay, to get men to understand and accept in their lives this fundamental truth. God will not spare any expense to Himself; He has risen up early and sent His messengers, He has sent forth His only-begotten Son, He has loved and suffered and sacrificed, that a conviction

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of this truth might become lodged in the hearts of men. Neither will He spare His children any expense, if that expense is necessary to make men know that man doth not live by bread only. They must go through deep waters, they must pass through fierce fires, they must hunger and be fed from hand to mouth, if in no other way they can learn God's thought of man—that his life is not in the things of time and sense only. Beasts may live by bread only; man may *exist* that way; but man, made in the image of His God, does not *live* that way. He may spend his life turning stones into bread, getting wealth and fame and power; but he has not found life unless he has found it in fellowship with God. Man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. In what I have said I do not mean that individual suffering is inflicted necessarily because of the needs of the one who suffers, but the world's suffering is for the world's discipline.

It would give me pleasure to speak more of personal things; to recall those eight years since President Cravath took me into his fatherly affection and gave me the privilege of his fellowship. But this is not proper at this hour. I bring to you who are here to-day this testimony to the comfort, to the joy that comes

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out of fellowship with God — fellowship not with the transient and little things of life, but with the great things that lift us up, that fill us with divinity, that put us on the way of growth, until at last we shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God.





Resolutions adopted at the Fifty-fourth Annual Meeting of the American Missionary Association, held at Springfield, Mass., October 23, 1900.

THE American Missionary Association, with profound grief, deploras the loss from the ever-lessening ranks of its laborers of one who, as a secretary of the Association and president of its largest institution of learning, has for more than a generation championed the principles for which the Association was founded — Erastus Milo Cravath.

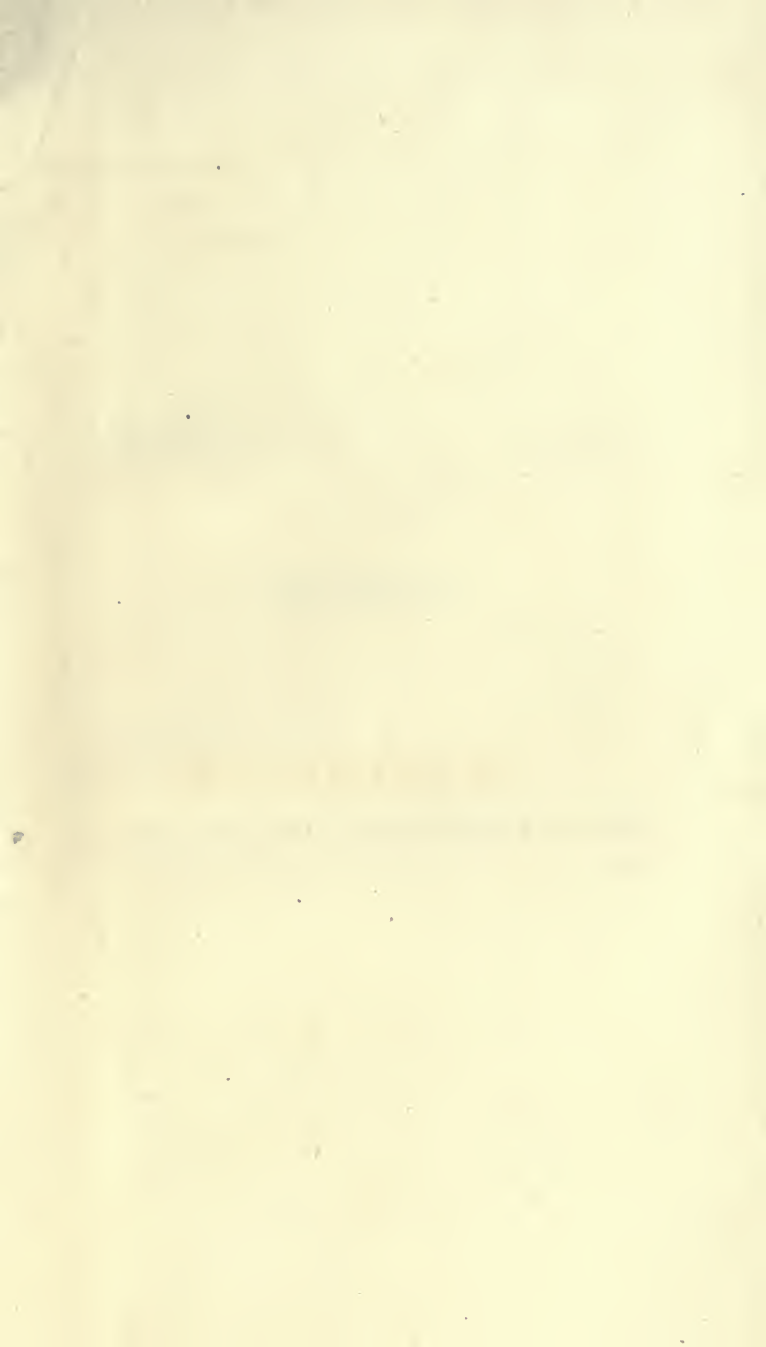
“The Association would place upon record its high appreciation of the great ability and deep consecration of the first and only president of the institution, which, in common with other schools of the Association, he planted at strategic centers in the South.

“It would convey to the family of Dr. Cravath, and to the faculty, alumni, and student-body of Fisk University, its profound sympathy in view of their bereavement.

Resolutions

“It would join, with all the friends of the people for whom Fisk was founded, in prayer to God that He should choose one to succeed President Cravath who shall work out the plans for the fulfilment of which this master-workman wrought, for which he laid down his life.”





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